

Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, December 10, 1819, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO PRESIDENT MONROE.

Hermitage, December 10, 1819.

D'r Sir. I have this moment recd. the confidential letter from the Department of war of the 22nd ult.¹ Contents noted I have Issued the necessary orders to carry into effect the preparatory measures therein required. on the event of my services being required in the field I wish the permission of taking Capt Gadsden into my family, if it can be done with propriety and there is a vacancy in the line I have to request that young Mr Lewis Livingston² may be appointed a 2 Lieut—he is a fine material and has solicited to be in my staff, he speaks french and writes it correctly and would be usefull to me as a translater of the french or spanish Languages,

1 This confidential letter contained the following: “The return of the Secretary of War to the seat of government being delayed by his illness, the President directs me to say to you, that it is possible a rapid military movement will be ordered upon Florida soon after the meeting of Congress. Preparatory to which, he directs that you hold the troops under your command in readiness for such service.”

2 Son of Edward Livingston. He was not appointed.

On the subject of a simultaneous attack on Ft st augustine, and Pensacola I refer you to my letter to the sec of war and will here remark— If Fort St augustine has not recd. a reenforcement, and a sufficient naval force ordered on that station to prevent them from receiving succour from Cuba—the light artillery and 2nd Infantry will be competant to

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reduce it. But it would be hazzarding defeat, to make the attempt, depending for succour from my army, Pensacola and the Barrancas is defended says report by 2000 troops including militia. four days can bring them relief from Cuba. the Barrancas has been and is now under repair, and can be made very strong. The aggregate of my force which can be counted disposable, ought to be reduced one fourth at least, to have the amount of real effectives. under all these considerations, I have sugested to you in my letter to the Department of War as the safest course, to concentrate the whole force and commence operations at the Barrancas and reduce them in detail. Barancas and St Marks reduced Ft St augustine will surrender when summoned. it is a strong *fortress* and with 500 regulars and its militia, it would be risqueing a good deal to invest it with the two Regts. you cannot calculate (if they are full) on more than 1200 effectives. Casualties will take place daily, and in a short time the besieged will be stronger than the assailants, who have a strong fortress to contend with as well as equal numbers and unless taken by *a coup de main* , by crossing the Bri[d]ge in the rear of the Town in the night—seizing the Town, by surprise by which the fortress may be compelled to surrender. If defended by a military man he will be on the alert and that case it must be reduced by regular approaches or carried by storm with the hazzard of great loss—a superior force to the enemy, will be necessary, to secure victory and success, and nothing ought to be left to chance in military operations. I have thought proper to make those sugestions to you, for your consideration that the means employed may be adequate to the attainment of the object in view, and that success may be ours. My health is very precarious, but as the perfidy of Spain has left us no alternative with the smiles of heaven I will endeavour to place once more the american Eagle upon the ramparts of the Barancas Pensacola, St Marks, and reduce Ft St augustine and then beg leave to retire if I survive to private life.³

³ In a letter to Monroe (Nov. 29, 1819) Jackson expressed a wish to resign “so soon as my services can be dispensed with”. The entire letter is not preserved, but there is a fragment, with these facts indorsed on it, in Jackson's handwriting.

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Present Mrs. J. and myself to your amiable lady and family and believe me to be your
mo. ob. servt.